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VOLUME 19

No. 4 — Summer — 1956

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Canadian Poetry Magazine

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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE



Summer 1956

VOLUME 19 - - NUMBER 4

Committee:

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" . . . it would be a disastrous error to suppose that, because our art form has once become classical, it therefore can no longer be used, except for academic practice. No form is ever superannuated if it be the best possible vehicle for expressing a new artistic idea. A poet need be no more afraid of using the Shakespearean or Petrarchan sonnet, than a musician need be ashamed of composing a classical fugue, providing his inspiration be genuine; and its genuineness will not be obscured or destroyed by being cast into some old and well tried mould."

—From "Thamyris", or Is There a
Future For Poetry?"

by R. C. Trevelyan

PORTRAIT

My great aunt lived a sonnet
through her stately metered days
each small event was scanned and bent to a clean rhythm;
rising at seven in the damask curtained room
set the sure pattern of the planned octet,
the daylight hours in clear iambics moved
along the sweeping halls and curving stair,
chairs, china, clocks and books were touched
as carefully and certainly as periods and commas
and, as the day unwound, each circumstance
became a vivid word that wove into the whole.

At sundown with the lighting of the lamps
the sestet shaped its subtler fuller tempo
then those who knew her in those leisured evenings
saw suddenly the structure of her life
lived quietly but to a high design.
They were not surprised that when she died
the dignity of her last hours was like a noble couplet.

*Miriam Jans,
Lansing, Mich.*

RAIN MUSIC

Cell by woody cell
The coastland forest thirsted,
Silent in the windless heat.
The cruel chemistry of drouth
Shrivelled and bleached
The under-nourished leaves
Into a parchment-dry
And yellow canopy.

Until one listless dawn,
The heavens slowly shadowed;
A shallow, rustling sound
Swept like a giant's whisper
Through suppliant limbs held high
As though in anguished prayer.
Staccato drum-like bursts,
A fugue of pulsing beats,
Shattered the woodland hush
And all of Nature's elements
Joined in a symphony of sibilant sound,
The ancient prelude to Pacific rain.

*Don W. Thomson,
Ottawa, Ont.*

PORTRAIT OF MOBY-DICK
AS A YOUNG WHALE

Sheltered in the cosmic sea untried,
Young Moby frolics in the bloodless wave
While overhead, a newly-minted star
Glints on the whitened back—
A light that Ahab never saw.
Now the sleek skin unmarred
By iron of the myth rejoices
In unfathomed depths and rising,
Breaches high to spout water
To the fresh, pellucid skies.
Unmindful of the awesome power,
The *Cetus* flips ecstatic fin;
Swims East of Eden unaware
Of pigmy pride, the double-edged harpoons.

*L. W. Michaelson,
Iowa City, Ia.*

FULFILMENT

A poet cannot change the world
Nor add to human worth,
He can but plant a tiny seed
Beneath the crust of earth.

And when his hope exfoliates
Above the common sod,
He can but call mankind to view
A masterpiece of God.

*Don W. Thomson,
Ottawa, Ont.*

SONG FOR THREE DEAD POETS

JONSON, HOUSMAN, LORCA

I

Ah Ben, three hundred springs
Have laid their beauty by,
Since wild stars cried your death about the sky.
And still the echo of your song soars on
Although the heart that fostered it is gone.

Like wine thy verse has mellowed with the years.
Bearing its golden horde of joy and tears.
In coffee house and inn along the way,
You spun the magic that remains today.

Ah Ben, this brimming cup to thee I pledge
As here I lie beneath a flowering hedge.
And may thy spirit e're enchant my pen
To bring the beauty of thy voice again!

II

Housman, tutor of my heart,
Wherever you may be;
Master, with a humble heart,
I'll shed a tear for thee.

Youth will fly and lads will die
And passion will grow cold,
And yet thy lyrics still retain
The matchless warmth of old.

The lads still love in Shropshire,
The Severn still runs cold,
They hang the lads in Shewsbury jail
Just as they did of old.

Old poet, are you listening?
A cup I raise to thee.
A health I'll drink to
Housman's soul
Wherever he may be!

III

"Brothers, O Brothers,
Why is there silence
In the city square?"
"Even the birds are still
Brother
For our poet is dead."

O beautiful Garcia Lorca
Lying stark and cold
With the Assassin's bullet
Burning in your chest;
What do you dream of?

Do you see the emerald banks
Of Guadalquivir
Or the bustling byways
Of Cordoba?
Is there breath left in you
To sing of the faithless,
The beautiful and the doomed?
Can you cry out from your
Cold grave and set a nation's
Soul to burning with your song?
Or is there but an echo;
The hollow ring of bullets
Striking bone,
The song cut short upon
Those bleeding lips.
The people loved you
So you had to die.
O beautiful Garcia Lorca
Do you sleep well
In your bloody grave?

*C. G. Dafoe,
Winnipeg, Man.*

RENUNCIATION

I have weighed every word so long
That I cannot speak;
Have searched each thought so deep
That my mind is bare.

If your clew now leads you on
Toward the misty goal you seek
I shall wish you well, O my once-beloved,
But I shall not care.

*Dale Scott,
Kingston, Ont.*

ZOE

You wanted bread
He gave you stone,
Why did you dread
To stand alone?

Your savage heart
Cried out for prey,
But shared no part
Of his swift day.

Your coward's cave
He could not enter,
To whom life gave
No calm still-centre.

How could he heed
Your fox's nest
When an eagle need
Clawed at his breast?

*Vernal House,
Toronto, Ont.*

POEM FOR NOW

Whip not the dragon
Of reluctant love
To flame-tongued fission
At the drawbridge
Of your moat-dry heart.

Wake not the giant
Of relentless guilt
To night-long weeping
In the blacked-out cavern
Of your hollow dream.

Wave not the toppled banner
Of the burning martyr
Against a cloud-drowned heaven
In the country
Of your buried hope.

Weave not the blunted diamond
Of the coreless drill
Into the rockstrong city
Where your treasure
Has already been betrayed.

Have you not seen how flowers
Spring-leaping on a mountainside
Can split a boulder-shelf
To fragments, making mockery
Of man-made might?

*Vernal House,
Toronto, Ont.*

TWENTIETH CENTURY GIANT

Violets crushed.
Century old conifers
crash.

Mechanized warlord
dinosaur size
butting with raucous noise.

Forests
fields to ruthless treads
tearing dignity from towering trees.
Spirea and white dogwood fall alike.
Green mosses and fragile flora
for an insatiable appetite.
Burnished arbutus-bronze
hopelessly scarified;
royalty remarks not so slight a loss.
King of the green-forest-sea
whipping tempests such as no wind
could rouse.

No mailed fist shakes ultimatum.
Swiftly the warfare is accomplished;
hidden nests fouled
ancients dispossessed
hills made plain
mountains crumbled
where the invader moves.

Regret lost violet-peace,
tumbled loveliness of flowing dogwood crests.
Shudder the uprooted might of regal conifers.

Row upon uniform row
the houses of Man
grow where grew the tangle —
quail and pheasant nests.

Conqueror of the unarmed;
the bulldozer.

*Marion Kathleen Henry,
Calgary, Alberta, Canada.*

PINEWOOD EVENING

Evening comes to the pinewood.
Birdlike in the branches
memories star-splinter the dusk.
Small voices trumpet the silence.

Faraway comes close
and long ago is now.
What shall we do with those
who come pecking at the door
like visitors for whom we are unprepared?
Could we not welcome them?
There is room here; evening is emptier
than need be. The voices disturb
only me.

Winter lingers
and dreariness like an old grey cover
lies rumpled across the couch of the land.
Even willow-fire burdens,
yet without such warmth thoughts do not rise.

Sudden snowflakes
would be a beautiful ballet
if sullen clouds should come to life,
but they do not.

Memories are not as lovely as snowflakes
which would swirl and descend from the low arc
of heaven, keeping an ethereal whiteness
in the branches. Memories come
bringing a new silence,
brushing a heaviness
on the pinewood evening.

*Marion Kathleen Henry,
Calgary, Alberta.*

HYPERION'S SONG OF FATE

You walk on high in the light
Over soft ground, you blessed spirits!
Bright numinous airs
Lightly caress you,
As the musician's fingers
Stir holy strings.

Fateless, like the slumbering
Boy, breathe the heavenly ones;
Chastely furred
In a bud
Their spirit
Eternally flowers,
And their blessed eyes
Gaze in lasting and
Lucid stillness.

But we are kept moving.
We suffering mortals
Fall through the years,
Are diminished in falling
Headlong from one
Hour to another,
Like water from crag
To crag rebounding
Into uncertainty,
Down, down and away.

*Translated by K. W. Maurer,
Winnipeg, Man.
(from Hölderlin)*

FRESH WATER MORNING

Now, in this dawnless night
when darkness withers the will,
come to him, west wind, come.
Blow him a fresh water morning,
a friendly fair weather morning
quick with the clamour of gulls.

The little old yawl is ready.
No, she has not forgotten.
Her tiller takes with familiar ease
to the horny grip of his hand
and there's joy in her lapstreak chatter
as she slips through the long piers . . .
out, out into open water.

The toughening pull on her sheet
in the pull of life to him.
Let her romp! Let her heel
till she shows her keel
as he snugs her main and heads her up
to meet the whitening seas!

Does he laugh aloud
as he lifts his face
to the blessed bite of spray?

Oh, blue encircling morning,
be shoreless. Let the sky
rim you round forever.

Ontario, Ontario,
be his enduring heaven.

*Helen Ball,
Toronto, Ont.*

SUBMISSION

The night is very tired,
The night is still,
Couched in the moth dark
Under moon hill.

Nothing you can do or say,
Nothing you can know,
Burrows through her slumbers
Till cock crow.

Flay at her with angers,
Shout you cannot bide her —
You will learn the strongest wing
Folds beside her.

*Lotta Dempsey,
Toronto, Ont.*

TO GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Beauty always gave a double gleam
To eyes that penetrated both effect and cause,
The manifest and hidden, sun-speckled clouds,
Cloud's architect. The eyes of priest and boy
Beauty-awake and wide, gave morning esteem
And all dappled things, elements of crowds.
Whatever was lovely, different or well-known
With spiritual import, occasioned him to pause.
Crushed quartz in convent paths, that shattered beam
Was sentient too. Change from a changeless throne
His theme.

*M. E. Drew,
Lebel, Ont.*

LANDING AT VICTORIA

Against the scrawny comfort of the crane-legged pier
The ship shudders, feeling the shore coils tighten.
Sullen, she subsides and the brackish port-locked water
Touching tentatively, laps her sea-knowing hull.

Deep within, the voyagers crowd one another,
Poking like trees above the luggage bushes.
Tightening their arms around satchels, around babies,
Around themselves, awaiting release.

Thrust of forward motioning,
Hands clutch at straps, elbows clamp, heads bend,
Shuffling and shouldering down the gangplank.
Damp-nosed, the land wind nuzzles necks.
Into the wooden passageway their heels tap sharply.
The floor clatters a story, over and over.
Flowing and flapping through the sheathing corridor
They burst to the flowering sunlight.

The cluster of waiting people, like a sponge,
Soaks them up and away.

*Mary Allan,
Calgary, Alberta.*

TO THE PEACE-MAKERS

It is not enough to begin with a cry of fear,
With a clutching together.
The hatred seeps through, darkly familiar.
The symbol of the dove is not enough,
The god has departed from it, and it rattles ominously.
The speeches and the shouting and the long processions are
 whipped up
Out of the fear, out of the clutching together,
Reared high on the obvious moment.
They are not enough.
All these are not enough.

Those of calm eyes with the searching within them,
The long, tireless searching ;
It is more of these that we need.
Those of determined feet, walking back along the corridors of
 history,
Lighting the lamps, swinging aside the curtains,
Striding beside the men they could well fear,
Retracing with them the steps of their lives,
Recreating their dramas,
Shaping bit by bit the monumental work of comprehension ;
It is more of these that we need ;
More living at the deep core.

*Elfreida Read,
Vancouver 8, B.C.*

GEORGIAN BAY

(ATTIGOUANTAN)

The Great Necklace, Huronia's pride,
 lies etched in blue shadow.
Off Honey Harbour, the spent shuttle
 of the sun is a golden bird
 snared in a web of mist.

Landward, an idling breeze
 twirls rosy puff-balls
 into the afterglow ;
They drift over the glooming pines
 and fluttering green fans
 of mannequin birches.

Dusk, and the loon's quavering cry
 echoes across the shimmering waters.
Lonely* The Watchers
 keep their timeless vigil ;
But no muffled sound of enemy paddle
 breaks the covenant of the centuries.

Tonight sullen tides are awash
 on reef and shoal ;
The stars' pencilled code falls
 on a blotter of cloud ;
The moon is a rudderless ark
 on the high seas of heaven.

*A group of islands in southern Georgian Bay.

On Giant's Tomb Island, ghostly tribesmen
 who guard the mighty Kitchikiwana
 stand motionless;
They are listening, listening . . .
Was that the crunch of arrowhead
 on splintered rock?
The slither of stealthy moccasins
 over spray-wet boulders?
Mutely the grasses breathe an intercession
 for the ancient dead.

Suddenly, storm is a vanishing wraith
 fleeing a lost wind's lament.
Over the quiet land, drowsy with the scent
 of clover and wild honey,
Sounds the sombre horn of the owl,
The sandpaper chirr of the cricket,
And the sinister gulp of the hawk's wings
 as he arrows to his prey.

Serene and strong from his retreat
 floats the vibrant call
 of the whippoorwill,
 nocturnal singer of Northern summers.
Furtive children of the forest
 are comforted;
His voice lightens the toil of the beaver.

Dawn, enchanted barefoot boy,
 rushlight in hand,
Comes running up from the east;
Soon the crested hills are his
 and all the jewelled islands.

Along the marching leagues of shore,
 from deeps and shallows,
 cove and shingle,
Ascends a murmured Benedicite . . .
Lovely Attigouantan is at morning prayer!

*Kathryn Munro,
Toronto, Ont.*

*INNUIT

Down where the Midnight Sun's phantasmal glow
Candles the Arctic winter's torpid flow,
 Where summer is a Bird of Paradise
 That tarries for an hour, then homeward flies,
The Happy People live, and daily share
With those in need their rude and scanty fare.

Inviolate their law of brotherhood;
Their ancient covenant, the common good.
 Nurtured in jeopardy, to hazard bred,
 They meet the challenge of the Titanhead:
Want, and the treachery of moving scree,
Inconstant day, and lost immensity.

Immune from sickness and the plague that kills
Until the white man brought his bag of ills
 (His psuedo-culture tablets and his gear,
 Fur-pirate from a traders' hemisphere),
He unaware that theirs are gifts apart,
Intrinsic skills and native forms of art.

Polaris burns his ghostly lamp before
The lonely threshold of their tribal door;
 Rayed by the maestro of the Northern Lights,
 Celestial nocturnes chime through starless nights . . .
At peace, content, the happy-hearted rest
Safe-cradled on the mighty Polar breast.

*Kathryn Munro,
Toronto, Ont.*

*Eskimo word meaning 'the people.'

BY A KITCHEN WINDOW

My hands are mixing dough and kneading bread ;
My eyes are lifted to a veil of light
That films the blue above with pearly white,
And glistens through the branches overhead.
My fingers sprinkle cloth and napkins, spread
And folded on a table, yet a bright
Enchanting blue jay captivates my sight
Or else a cardinal is flashing red.
Although my hands perform a common task,
And though monotonous the work may be,
With dish pan or with broom, each day the same ;
To ease the labor, I could never ask
For greater charm than this my eyes can see,
While looking through a kitchen window frame.

*Ethel R. Murphy,
Washington, D.C.*

LIGHTFALL

The return of daylight is all returning.
Trunks framing the depth of plough
Is one with the Euston Road burning
Other returns on the mind of now.

The hills back where the dark crowded
The west window join hands to sing
With Hyde Park crossed by the cherry-clouded
Home-coming late on a spring evening.

And the air again holding a crystal
Holding the country, holding the sea
Is one with the moment holding all
When the day of your arms returned to me.

*J. Phoenixe,
Berwick-on-Tweed, England.*

FLAMINGOES

Flamingoes, flamingoes
In thousands, in millions, blown like flakes of fire,
Dawn-scarlet, sunset- bannered, ruby-red.
If all the orchards of the world could shed
Their petals down one whirl of hurricane ire
The plumes could not be more.

Flamingoes, flamingoes
So many — they barely fringe a tithe of shore
Of Lake Victoria; mountain- steeps of steel
Guard the dark secret why their myriads wheel
About their cradle and their grave, from hoar
Unhistoried time, till when?

Flamingoes, flamingoes
Spun, spilled like sunset and barbaric dawns
Aeons on aeons before the smoke of man,
Yet perfect each in colour, keel and span,
They flame and perish, while oblivion yawns,
And northward flows the Nile.

Flamingoes, flamingoes,
Tossing their flames of timeless beauty, while
The dark swift waves of that tremendous pool
Sow realm on buried realm and school on school,
Moses and Solon, Pharaoh and the file
Of Empires following, following him.

Flamingoes, flamingoes.
The Nile gives up her secret, but still dim,
Impenetrable, locked in walls of steel,
The cause is hid that bade your brilliance wheel
And all the tides of mortal yearning brim —
O, towards what fountain-head?

*Geoffrey Johnson,
Breadstone, Dorset, England.*

LINES FOR A CARPENTER

The house is built, the key is in the door,
The roof secure against the blowing rain.
No need to strengthen walls or test its floor —
This house is done. Why feel this thrusting pain
At work completed — rest for work-worn hands —
At tools laid down? Somewhere that other builder
Welcomes him . . . On some ensilvered strand
They work together. Let not this dark bewilder.
Eternity is long and has no night —
With shining tools he builds through endless light!

*Maude Rubin,
Santa Ana, Calif.*

ELUSION

An April whisper — wind caressed my face
I laughed and leaned into the breath of spring
I smiled and wished that I could chase
Light, glancing sun — drops to a faery ring.
I sighed and knew I must — I knew not why —
Forsake my faery ring for vulnerable reef —
My gaze sought answer in the elm-caged sky;
A perfect, untouched bud sprang into leaf.

Old, I walked in dark, dead, never — ending streets of Doubt;
A tower chime fell faint. It was the voice of Truth — I knew
the note
And stumbled up the hill. The tower was surrounded by a moat.
The moat surged up and sucked me deep.

Old, I walked in hope beneath my lofty elm;
The perfect, untouched leaf was Prince of autumn's realm;
Its amber body shuddered — my empty hands reached to
overwhelm —
The leaf of gold flew past me down the street.

*J. Elizabeth Harper,
Summerside, P. E. Island.*

BOY SPINNING TOP

The little boy
With colored top
Tried to spin it
Without a stop.

Unconsciously,
He imitated
A greater Spinner
Who created

An endless whirling,
In myriad stations,
Of countless, colored
Constellations.

What secret is it
That must please
Spinner of tops
Of galaxies?

*Louis Ginsberg,
Paterson, N.J.*

WINDOW

Tall-vaulted window, arching from the walls,
Mullioned with veins of lead,
Passion lilting in the splash
Of color on the air :

Stained in red against the cobalt glass,
Two figures illuminate the dusk :
Church-time reads their shadow
In the angle of the pews.

Resting intemperate, spaciouly,
Against geometry of dogma,
Building stones upon its stones,
Enthroned, a priest within the planes of light.

Hear the sibilance of sorrow
In the window's other man :
Confessional, he kneels, bracing
Against his father's chair.

Man, man, modern, wise, all-seeing.
Genuflects to antiquity ;
Blar-eyed, hides his bottle,
Fingers beads and mumbles words.

*David C. Collins,
Louisville, Kentucky.*

Twenty-Nine

WHAT BOUNDARY

The measureless tides that ravage me,
Their separate moons, their density
Like currents from the weedy deep
Uncharted by the waves' wild leap
Plunge fitfully, controlling eye
With lustre loaned from blowing sky.
Oh have I shored too soon to change
A spirit needing leagues to range?

*Bernice Ames,
Los Angeles, Calif.*

DIPLOMAT

His day began with candle light
and nothing sudden brought him from the night.
In grave economy of Sunday motion
he trimmed the taper with devotion.
No evidence of struggle, no wick-waver
lessened light or slanted favor.
No ritual or ceremony of tongue
could call this burning bright or young.
The yellow flame of constant thought
templed soon and never fury-caught
worried through the tallow, then released
a sputter when the fire had ceased.
His night began without the sound of fire
yet trailing threads of black desire.

*Bernice Ames,
Los Angeles, Calif.*

AND THESE FEW WORDS

When I am old, will I remember this
Warm, bright embrace of sunlight on my flesh;
This sloping beach; the moving, gleaming mesh
Of willows; and will I recall the kiss
Of river-wind upon that younger man,
That I am now? Only within these lines
May I perceive a glimmer of what shines
This burning day. Only this sonnet can,
If it survives, recall the turquoise sky
Above the gold and emerald of the earth;
And these few words may say of what I hold:
It may be this same happiness that I
Now know will find, in others, a re-birth:
Beauty will be as young, when I am old.

*Willis Eberman,
Portland, Oregon.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Perhaps there is a nature just as pure —
A voice as filled with wisdom from above;
Perhaps this one could make me feel as sure
That on this earth dwell Beauty, Truth and Love:
He plants me all the seasons, all the ages;
He calls the universe to my garden walks;
He lights my flickering candle through his pages,
So far beyond mere words that men must talk.
Ah, pity us who cannot follow where
He goes so lightly — through that starry wood
Of his own eloquence, to braid the hair
Of all the muses of the infinite good:
Well met, O gentle spirit, scattering herbs
Of love and faith through wisdom's seed — mere words.

*Cullen Jones,
San Rafael, Calif.*

THE CHANGE

This ditch was once a brook that bravely flashed
Beneath bent flanks of willow and of may.
Here children felt cool pebbles as they splashed,
Their naked forms awash in lucent play.

I see my childhood ripple through the sun ;
Broad shafts reveal the motes beneath the drift,
Bright water-beads were caught, that one by one
Slipped singing from my limbs in movement swift.

Those pearls have gone, they melted in the stream,
They lost the sun imprisoned in the tear,
Have swept away the green-laugh of the dream,
Have met wide seas in tide-mark pool of fear.

Yet see, I cup a chalice in my hands,
I lift the glinting crystal to the light.
I watch the pulsing red of fingered bands,
Libation soothes the sorrow, sealing sight.

I moved across the muddied swirl of time,
To match this mood with king-cup-gold of youth,
When days were dancing stanzas of a rhyme
Before age drilled the hollow in the tooth.

Small feet no longer tread that laughing brook ;
Pale hands retrace the vein's blue road on white
Nor under-water open-eyes to look,
Where fishes blush their gills, rose-red on sight.

This day I stand where houses lap the bank,
If this cracked lip of silt is called that name ;
I see strange weeds and grasses tall and rank,
And hear the gurgle underneath the shame.

*Richard A. George,
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